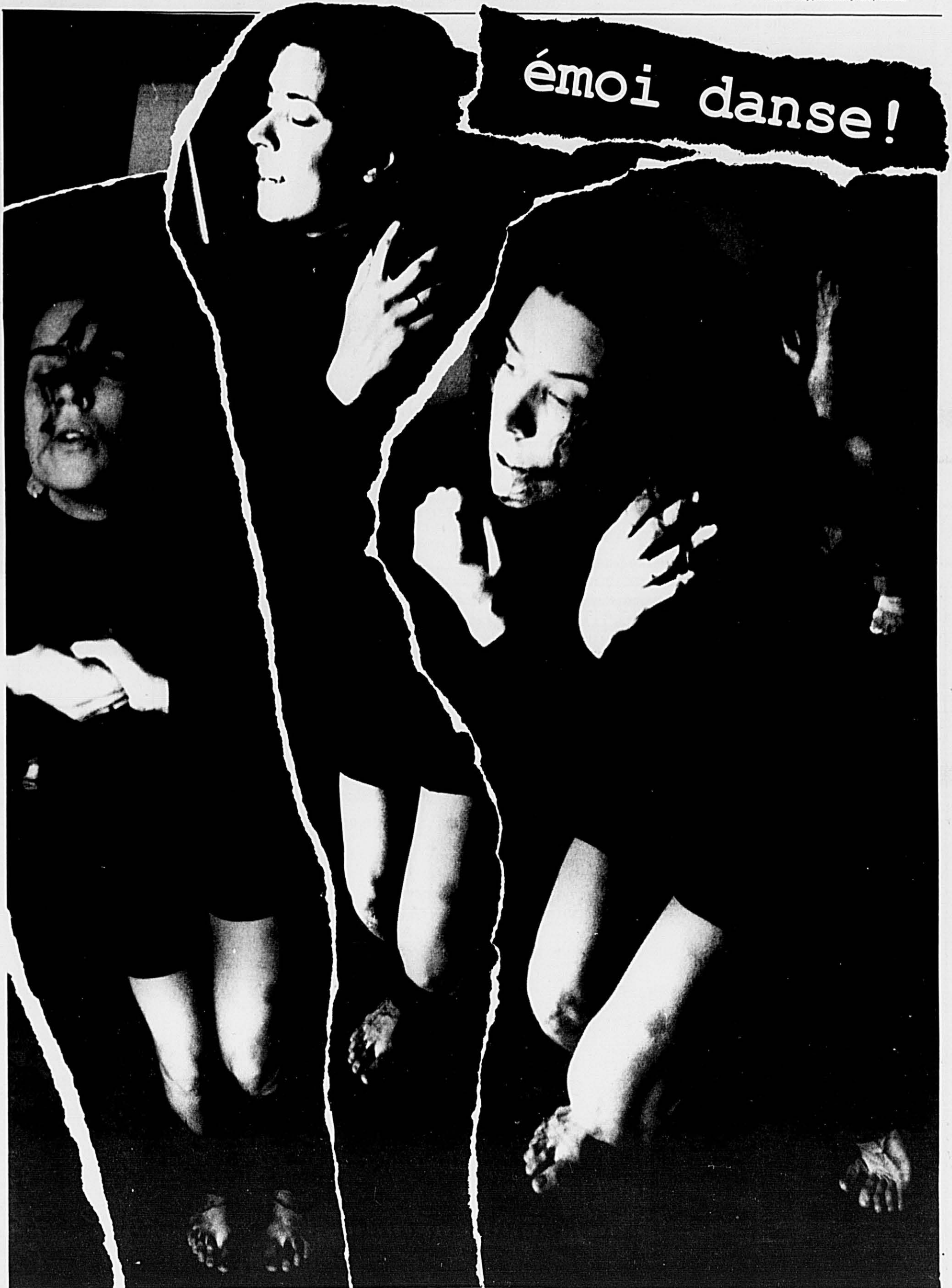


MCGILL DAILY CULTURE

Volume 81, Number 59

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Thursday, January 23, 1992



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Students or persons wishing to nominate a student may pick up application kits at **Students' Society General Office, 3480 McTavish Street, Room 105.**

Upon Completion, application forms may be returned to the Scarlet Key committee through Internal Mail at the Students' Society information desk. If you require additional information, please inquire at the Students' Society information desk or call:

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Contemporary dancing not all heavy art shit

by Dan Robins

Montréal's newborn collective Emoi Danse are reluctant to discuss the themes they incorporate into their contemporary dance works. It would be unsporting.

"You create your own story watching," insisted dancer Kelly McKinnon.

"Often the audience expect that they're supposed to know exactly what's going on, and a lot of the time that's not the point," added Katrina Eby.

However, the four members of the company said most of their works stem from personal experiences, or personal reactions to social events. Even where emotion is not the motivating force of the dancers, they agreed, each piece should evoke a mood or feeling in the audience.

Lee Anholt, one of the dancers, was the most resistant to the idea that all dances had to be based in personal emotion. He often prefers to work with pure movement and shape, he said.

"It's not all heavy art shit," he added. "It's really open." The company, which moved to Montréal from Vancouver in September, gives its first local performance this Saturday.



DAILY PHOTO: KATERINA CIEK

urday.

"There are so many variables in contemporary dance that in the end you have a very dynamic form," said Phillip Djwa, who does music for the group, an electro-acoustic counterpart to the dancing.

Except for the final piece, all works being shown this weekend are solo. Rare in contemporary dance, Djwa described solo as "the hardest thing to do — you've just got one person, all alone with lots of space."

Eby said the show on Saturday would be ideal for newcomers to the world of contemporary dance. The individual pieces run no more than 15 minutes, not too much for strained attention spans. And the group is always conscious of mak-

ing the show enjoyable for those who may not get all the contemporary dance in-jokes.

As for day-to-day survival, there are problems when the full-time job is dancing, where expensive hours can be spent practising each minute of performance time. The steady sources of cash, they said, were the Canada Council, provincial grants, and welfare.

But Montréal has a few outlets for independent dancers in such straits. Studio 303, where they are performing on Saturday, is one. Another they mentioned was Media Lezarts, a production company which shows new works.

Emoi Danse's solution to these problems was to collect together as a hybrid of independent and company dance. "By doing our own thing we're trying to avoid having to schmooz," said Anholt.

"The four of us have banded together to try and do something, and this Saturday is our first chance," he said.

Emoi Danse are performing at Studio 303, 372 Ste-Catherine ouest #303. The metro to look for is Place-des-Arts. The show starts at 20h30, and costs \$5.

Lebanon needs rehousing now, aesthetics later

by Jon O'Brien

Prince Charles doesn't like obtrusive modern architecture. A lot of people don't, including Samir Saddi. Saddi is a Lebanese architect who laments the loss of cultural identity in architecture all over the world.

In an exhibit entitled *L'Espace en Crise*, Saddi examines traditional Lebanese architecture. "It is an attempt to awaken people to the beauty of traditional methods," he said. "Modern materials and anonymous designs are incongruous with the landscape and the culture of Lebanon. Tradition needs a new breath."

Saddi's interest has been sparked by the recent rebuilding in Lebanon sparked by the urgent need for quickly available, affordable housing since the war. Although much needed, it is not in the context of traditional Lebanese architecture.

Saddi examines the problems of architecture all over the world. But he does not consider the expense of rebuilding with traditional methods and materials. Aesthetics are nice, but modern Lebanon can't afford them.

"Montréal faces its own dilemmas in the preservation of traditional designs," Saddi said. Rendering an apartment complex affordable means trimming expensive details, and reducing construction expenses.

"Locally, Montréal is losing its identity, and is conforming to economic restrictions in its housing. I propose we move to traditional materials and designs that are inexpensive to reproduce and quantify the culture that Montréal possesses,"

Saddi said.

If Montréal architects could beautify their designs and still retain cost effective housing, they would likely already be doing so. The problems which stand in the way of architectural decoration lie in the utilitarian aspects of housing and the needs of a general community.

If we could build our own abodes using traditional methods, con-

forming to our own tastes and needs, we would. But our geographical location and our lack of ingenuity in the domain of structure-building prevent this.

The architect must design for a generalised population and her artistic flair must be within his budget.

L'Espace en Crise is an interesting exhibit, but it fails to examine all the shortcomings in modern architecture. It only examines a few cities

in Lebanon and all the portraits are of adorable stone houses with vines abounding. These homes are the product of centuries of refurbishing, modification and extension.

On the other hand, Lebanon must quickly rehouse its population, and aesthetics will return with time and prosperity.

Saddi's exhibit accidentally reveals an alarming point. All the homes depicted have been built by their

inhabitants. One quickly realizes that individual Montréalers could not equal such splendor. To do so, one needs money — and an architect like Saddi himself.

L'Espace en Crise runs till February 16 at La Maison de la Culture Rosemont. Take the metro to Fabre, and head east on Jean-Talon till you hit de Lorimier. Go south to number 6707, on the corner with St-Zotique.

Lost innocence and passion in the Union

by Rachel Ditor

Passionplay, an original full-length play by McGill student Struan Sinclair, is a brave experiment.

Though it certainly has its moments of self-indulgence and pretentiousness, it is an interesting examination of the themes of lost innocence and passion.

When you walk into the theatre the action is already taking place. You soon discover that you are at the scene of a brutal crime, complete with sound effects, flashing lights, and Police Chief Kyle (Jason Weinberg) and Officer Moore (Duncan Appleton) checking out the damage.

The plot then moves back in time and we learn of the events that led up to the crime. The action centres around the relationship between Professor Robertson (Sinclair), and his ex-lover, ad designer Karine Wilson (Tricia Silliphant).

When they were in their late teens, the two had shared a passionate two-year relationship. Now,

fifteen years later, Karine has returned and initiates a reunion.

Their characters are revealed to us through Chief Kyle's investiga-



tion. Bit by bit we are able to piece together the lives of the ex-lovers, delving deeper and deeper into their warped psyches, until we arrive at the night of the crime.

Though the plot line may seem run of the mill, the characters and the language take some very un-

sual twists and turns. Sinclair writes very dense dialogue. So dense that, at times, you are unable to grasp exactly what the characters are talk-

ing about. You might even question if they know what they are talking about.

Nonetheless, there are some good performances, particularly Jason Weinberg in the role of Police Chief Kyle. Weinberg has a calm, commanding presence.

Passionplay also incorporates dance and live music. The music is very successful in creating a mood and a rhythm for each scene. It also serves to enhance the verbose text. At times the music is more accessible than the dialogue, and you are left more with a series of images than with anything concrete.

The presence of the dancers is a little less consistent in its effect. Sometimes they provide an interesting counter-rhythm to the action, and at other times their presence works against the action — reminiscent of *Saturday Night Live's* "Sprockets" skits.

Technically it is a very demanding show. The sound and lights are complex but are woven into the fabric of the play without a hitch.

Sinclair may have overextended himself in filling the roles of writer, director, and actor, but the overall effect is a very slick, provocative show. It's well worth seeing.

Passionplay runs till February 1 at Players' Theatre, 3480 McTavish, third floor.

THE MCGILL DAILY

COMMENT

Return to family values

Preston Manning, leader of the Reform Party of Canada, is in town today. The policies of the Reform Party have been frequently attacked as being racist, sexist and anti-francophone. It's not difficult to see the cause of this outrage.

The Reform Party has no position on women's issues. Deborah Grey, the party's one female MP has said, "I've always said a lot of these so-called women's issues, while they may directly affect women, are really best discussed as family or human issues." This does not address the problems of single mothers or women that choose alternatives to the traditional family. By refusing to recognize the various government and societal practices that work against women, the Reform Party condones those practices. To this end the Reform Party opposes the "universal and beauracrat social policy" of daycare.

The Reform Party's emphasis on the heterosexual family unit denies the rights of lesbians, bisexuals and gay men. According to party policy, a family or household-oriented social security system would replace many of the existing social policies we have today. A policy of only accepting the family unit reflects the desire for a homogeneous and conservative society. Such uniformity ignores the distinct needs and rights of the poor, women, First Nations, lesbians, bisexuals, gays, and religious and ethnic minorities.

This unwillingness to allow for alternative forms of life (or xenophobia for short) manifests itself most blatantly in both the immigration and multiculturalism policies of the Reform Party. One Reform Party document tells us that "The Reform Party opposes any immigration policy ... designed to radically or suddenly alter the ethnic makeup of Canada..." To maintain the status quo is to maintain Anglo, white dominance.

The Toronto Star of July 17, 1991 reports that Manning "would use the Charter's notwithstanding clause to undo a 1985 Supreme Court decision that concluded refugee claimants have the same rights as citizens and landed immigrants." Reform Party policy would strip refugees of their human rights.

The Reform Party would like to axe official bilingualism. Such a policy further alienates francophones and smacks of hatred and small mindedness.

The Reform Party's xenophobia finds itself in their deficit reduction strategies. Funding to Native communities would be cut, leaving Natives people "free to preserve their cultural heritage using their own resources." This completely ignores aboriginal rights and presupposes that the government of Canada has no obligations to First Nations.

The Reform Party policies also seeks to eliminate foreign aid from the governments budget. To oppose aid is to ignore many of the international environmental and social problems which are in part created by the Northern industrialized countries and require those countries participation to help solve.

But perhaps we should let party members speak for themselves. When Sheila Copps received angry letters for her comparison of Preston Manning to David Duke, ex-leader of the Klu Klux Klan, one of the writers, a Reform supporter wrote, "But just suppose you are right. What is the big deal?"

If you don't know, we couldn't possibly explain it to you.

Noah Quastel
Eric Smiley
Kate Stewart

LETTERS

That's not what I said

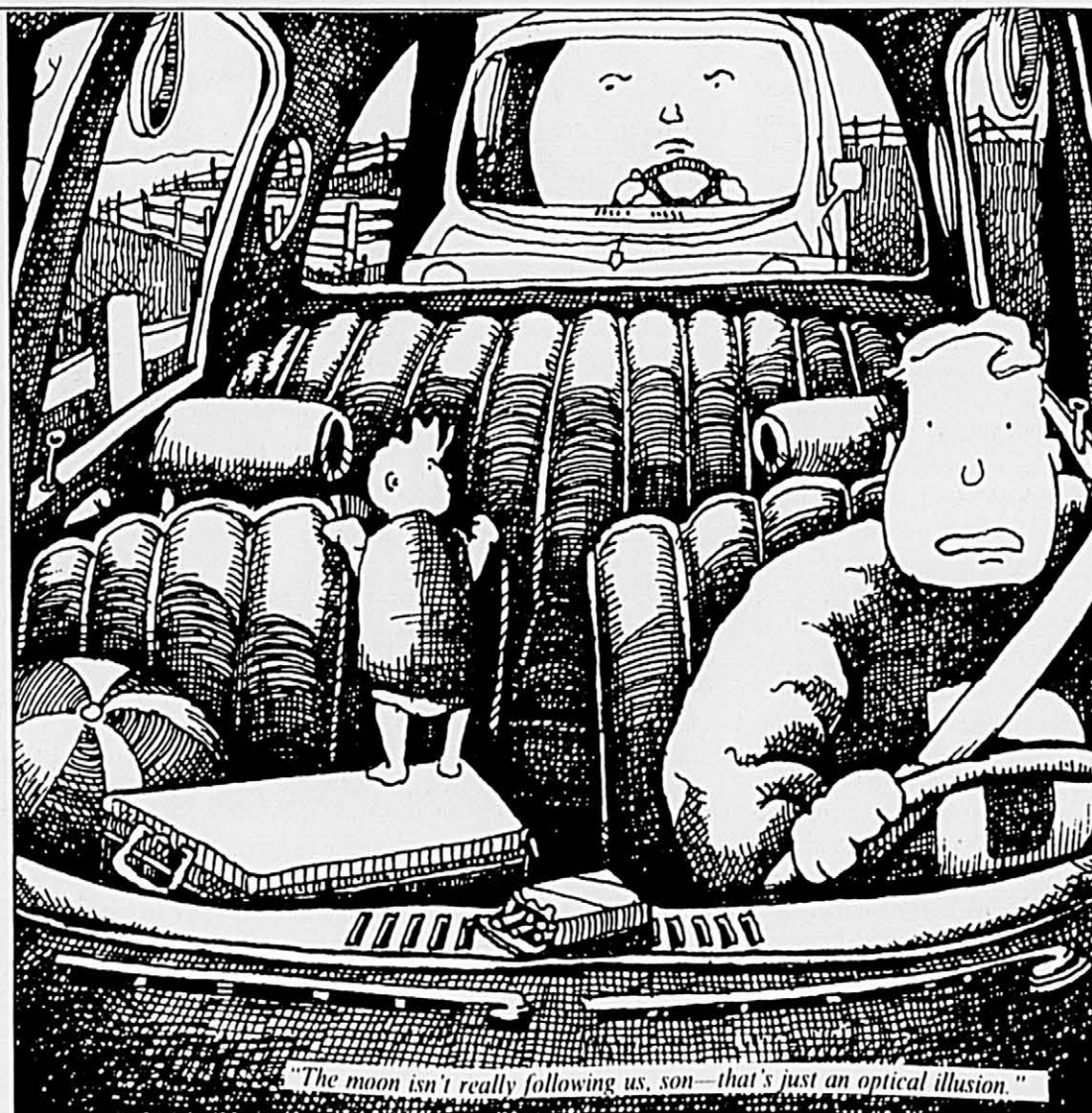
To the Daily:

I am writing in response to anonymous' letter of January 8 in regards to comments that I made in your November 22 Daily article.

To begin with, these comments were taken out of a statement I made, hence without the entire statement, it would appear that I was being unfair toward the accused. That is not so. The first

point I was trying to make was that anyone making a complaint may not be aware that the assessors role, at this time, is to not only take down the complaint, but to speak to the accused. In some cases, the person complaining may feel as though he/she is not being believed. Of course as any assessor will tell you, this is not the case. It is simply a procedural matter.

The second point my comments were



LETTERS

Daily goes nude

To the Daily:

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U2 Spy Plane

Don McGowan
U3's a Crowd

No gang of geeks here

To the Daily:

Re: David Morris' letter of January 22.

McGill may be "a gang of cheaters," but (with a few exceptions), it is not a gang of geeks. Lighten up Mr. Morris! Professors are well aware of cheating on lab reports and assignments. Most labs and assignments count for very little, (e.g.: Organic Chemistry 1% each). We ourselves choose not to cheat, however if others do then let it be. It will catch up with them on those hefty exams anyway.

Get off your high horse. If you choose to learn the material honestly, then congratulate yourself *privately*. Stick to the books, and quit your arrogant preaching.

Anonymous

trying to make was that perhaps McGill could look at a different approach to the procedure in regards to sexual assault and harassment assault complaints. One of the ideas that we (the Centre) are considering is a dual investigative system, as an alternate way or dealing with the complaints. In no way would we (the Centre) or I want or agree to the "destruction of the accused's rights" to a fair hearing, and for anonymous to suggest that this is what my comments signify is incorrect and misguided. I fully agree that false allegations, which are rare, can occur, oftentimes because of misunderstandings, as anonymous stated. However, I believe that anonymous, by not having all the facts, not only misinterpreted my comments but accused me of a "blind partisanship" which is not in evidence.

At present the Centre is working on a Sexual Assault Policy and welcomes anyone who wishes to contribute to its formulation. I hope that anonymous will be one of the contributors so as to assist us in safeguarding everyone's rights.

Sylvia Di Iorio Co-ordinator,
McGill Sexual Assault Centre

Speaks loud

To the Daily:

Re: It Was a Very Goddamn War

It is of our opinion that this "comment" by the Daily staff is based entirely on assumptions. The writers assume that the American and

Canadian governments, as well as the North American oil companies have no desire to see a peaceful Middle East. The writers also refer to the current peace talks (between Israel and the Arab nations) as "a load of horse shit." This asinine comment speaks loud enough for itself. They assume once again that the Americans, who set up the Peace conference in the first place, have no intention of seeing the participants succeed in reaching an agreement.

We believe that the peace talks are significant and groundbreaking if only because this is the first time that the Israeli and Arab governments have agreed to sit across the table from one another. We hope and believe that the peace talks will ultimately lead to a conclusive settlement.

In light of the peace process we feel that it is time also to break ground and the taboos which have separated Arab and Jewish students on campus. Therefore we are starting an Arab-Jewish Friendship Association on campus (McGill-Concordia) to promote dialogue and understanding between Arab and Jewish students.

Any student who is interested in joining an association devoted to these ideals should please contact us at 938-1835, ask for Michael or 270-8964 and ask for Ahmad.

Michael Silverman
U2 Jewish Studies
Ahmad El-Kavini
Concordia University

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contributors

Carl Wilson, Ardith Walkem,
Anik Hahn, Tien Lee, Jon O'Brien,
Rachel Diter, Glen Harris,
Noah Costel

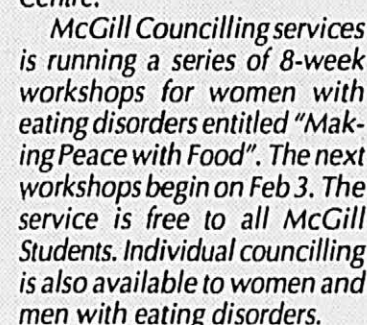
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Bad direction ruins *Reflecting Skin's* complexion

by Glen Harris

Touted as the new film of the *Blue Velvet/Days of Heaven* genre, *The Reflecting Skin* serves up little but disappointment.

The film, directed by Philip Ridley, takes place in a small prairie community in Idaho, filled with odd adults and confused boys, who try to make sense of their deranged social environment.

A more accurate comparison may be with Sandor Stern and his film *PIN*. The same slow pace exists, crucial editing which could have saved the film is lacking, and the protagonist, 7 year old Seth Dove (played by Jeremy Cooper) lives through similar experiences to *PIN's* lead boy.

In *PIN*, the boy has an imaginary relationship with an educational medical anatomy mannequin, in *The Reflecting Skin* it is with a foetus found in a barn. Both boys have traumatic experiences witnessing adults engage in sex; both boys try to prevent their siblings from being swept away by love.

Ridley made an international name for himself as the writer of *The Krays*. *The Reflecting Skin* is Ridley's first venture as both writer and director, and has proven to be too much for him. Most likely his closeness to the script kept him from cutting scenes that just don't work.

Unfortunately, his bad directing is enough to smother even skilled performers. Lindsay Duncan, whose performance in the British TV miniseries *Traffic* was cool and haunting, is disappointing in her role as Dolphin Blue, the obsessed widow of a whaler turned farmer.

At the beginning of the film she resembles Isabella Rossellini's Dorothy Valens in *Blue Velvet* — neurotic and tormented. However, the more Seth believes she is a vampire, the warmer and more stable she becomes.

Then Seth's older brother Cameron (Viggo Mortensen) falls in love with her. Cameron did time with the U.S. army, watching nu-



clear bombs get tested in the South Pacific, and now he's got radiation sickness. He appears Christ-like, with palms bandaged after being wounded in a fight.

Meanwhile, despite several intimidating interrogations by the Sheriff, Seth doesn't reveal the culprits responsible for the murder of

his friends, who have been disappearing from the community one by one.

The film is not without redeeming qualities (most of them visual), you just have to wait around for them. Most striking is the landscape — this film was shot in the prairies of Alberta where the land-

scape is gold from horizon to horizon. Swishing wheat fields and subdued sunsets form the environmental backdrop for the actors. The colour of the film is also excellent.

The Reflecting Skin has been called disturbing, but it cops out whenever it gets close to getting under one's skin. The script is clumsy

and comes off as contrived. Subtlety is sadly lacking in developing the story. Ridley would profit by giving up some control to others who have had more experience with the ropes of film-making.

The Reflecting Skin plays at the Rialto later this month.

Video addresses academia

Chilly climate keeps women out in the cold

by Anik Hahn

Running from class to class is not the only time some of us suffer from cold weather. According to the video *The Chilly Climate*, an unwelcoming environment is something many women face all year long inside university and col-

lege walls.

"It's feeling like you're not quite legitimate," one woman says in the video. Her feelings are echoed by other women students, faculty and administrators.

The video, made by the Women's Caucus of the University of Western Ontario, demonstrates the

various ways in which women experience a chilly climate at universities and colleges through subtitles.

Under the subtitle *Cold Front: exclusion and isolation*, for example, one woman describes how male colleagues walk past her open office door without including her in their lunch plans, until she asks them whether she can join them. "What can they say? They can't say no. But from the moment I join, the whole atmosphere changes, and it's like they're all out on a date with me."

An Asian woman, in the section titled *Wind Chill Factor: The doubly disadvantaged*, says she finds it hard to distinguish between her supervisors' racism and sexism when they disparage her work.

And in *Storm Warning: sexual harassment*, a professor explains the distress she experiences when she receives abusive homework assignments from male-dominated classes.

These examples, and others like them, may seem small, but as the women speak it becomes evident that, as one woman says, "It is possible to be crushed by a tonne of feathers."

The video also makes suggestions for ending the arctic blasts from sexist institutions.

It emphasizes the importance of Women's Studies departments, be-

cause they help uncover the structures at the root of institutional sexism. And different role models reflecting the diversity of student populations are also essential, according to the video.

"Without role models young people feel excluded, unrepresented, and they leave," says Amanda Sims, from the Federal Commission on the Status of Women.

After the viewing last Monday night at Thompson House, one Haitian woman spoke about her feeling that she is perceived as someone who is here to do dirty work and who doesn't really belong in an academic setting.

Another woman shared the difficulties she found in being both mother and student. "I feel like I have to be two people, and I don't find very much support or understanding around the university — it's wearing."

Tamara Myers, graduate Students' Society VP University Affairs explained her sense of being invisible in an academic setting.

"After I've given a presentation at a meeting, questions are not addressed to me, but rather to my male colleagues."

As Sims notes in the video: "As long as education is one-sided, used by one class, one sex and one race, it will be a tool of oppression."

Looney for a crisp-grunge

by Tien Lee

Montréal, you've acquired a friend. Superchunk played what was virtually a charity performance for showgoers at Foulfoules Electriques Tuesday night. Their refreshingly sincere crisp-grunge cost a mere looney.

Superchunk deserves all the exaltations they've been receiving lately, and more. Last Tuesday they played a perky set which kept the audience hopping along. No political or metaphysical messages here — Superchunk is just playing what they like.

Who would have thought a band so inherently energetic could emerge from Chapel Hill, North Carolina?

Vocalist and guitarist Mac McCaughan writes abstract lyrics in a way which often obscures their personal meaning. They seem quite light-hearted, but it's often hard to tell.

Meanwhile, the clean and steady bass lines of Laura Ballance complement the sustained washboarding guitars of Jim Wilbur and McCaughan.

Previous drummer Chunk, who lent the band its original name, was replaced last November by Jon Wurster. His lively percussion brings just the amount

of quick boom beat to unify Superchunk's low-key tones.

Though Superchunk recently put out the LP *No Pocky for Kitty* (April, 1991), they play close to seven unreleased songs, allowing them to change their set almost every night. They surprise listeners with their range of songs, from lingering sentimental chording to rapid wake-up scrubs.

When not superchunking, Ballance and McCaughan run Merge Records, a quaint and growing label based in Chapel Hill. They have recently released Superchunk's 7" singles "Fishing" and "The Freed Seed", as well as harder to find "Slack Motherfucker" and "What Do I". The band's additional single on Matador is titled "The Bread Man".

If you missed them at Foulfoules this time around, don't fret. You can still try to catch them on their six week westward tour of the United States. But hurry while you can still get in the door. Superchunk's not to be missed.

But Montréal dealers haven't caught on yet. If you want Superchunk singles or tees, you'll probably have to write away. Merge Records is at P.O. Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

Artists fighting photocopy-phobia

by Kate Stewart

When you think of a photocopier, what do you see? The image most people have of this machine is far from the creations of artists at Montréal's Centre Copie-Art.

Centre Copie-Art was founded in 1982 to serve as a forum for artists to experiment with photocopying. It's currently hosting *Copies Non Conformes*, an exhibit of works by local and international artists who use the photocopier to create not copies, but original pieces of art.

Phillippe Boissonnet, the artistic director at Centre Copie-Art, said that although copy art has been tried for years, most artists have been wary of using it as an art form on its own.

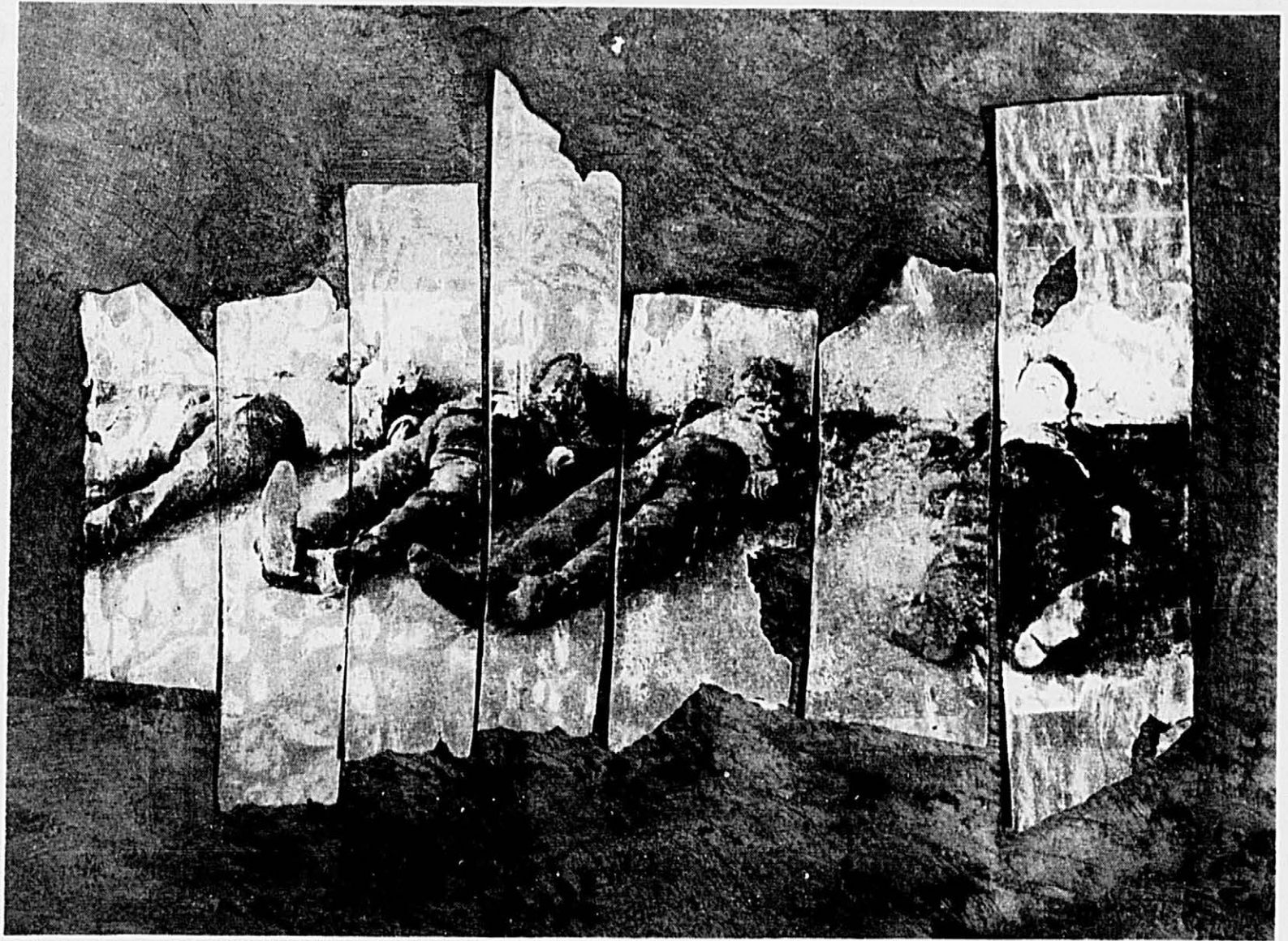
"There is a prejudice against the photocopier as a means of artistic expression," said Boissonnet, who is co-ordinating the *Copies Non Conformes* exhibit. "Most artists who use the photocopier only do it in the context of mixed media, or in very subtle ways."

Boissonnet's own work, displayed at the exhibit, uses very little else except photocopies he makes with a Canon laser copier.

Copy art, or copigraphy, is intriguing because it raises a debate within the artistic community over what is original and what is a copy. When photography was on its way to becoming a legitimate art, many of the same issues were addressed, said Boissonnet.

"But photography has already reached certain limits. Photocopy art is the basis for a discourse on reproduction and copying at a level never reached by photography."

Another reason artists don't take



risks with copigraphy, said Boissonnet, is fear. "The computer is becoming more and more important in art," he said. "Copigraphy is feared because it is part of what many people see as a mechanization of art."

But Boissonnet sees copy art as essential. "It is an element in the evolution of art," he said. "It contributes to advances in the science

of photocopiers itself. If we ignore it, we're missing something."

The members of the Centre Copie-Art are self-consciously aware of the implications of copigraphy. They prefer to approach copy art as a way of commenting on the questions of "the original" and "the copy", rather than seeing it as just straddling these two extremes.

The literature put out for *Copies Non Conformes* is full of reasons why photocopy art is not only legitimate, but necessary and fascinating. Boissonnet asks that instead of talking about reproduction, "could we not talk about (re)production?"

The *Copies Non Conformes* exhibit is a sampling of some of the best examples of what can be done

with photocopiers. It's unlike anything usually associated with office equipment.

Copies Non Conformes is showing at the maison de la culture Mercier, at 8105 Hochelaga until February 16. Take the metro to Honoré-Beaugrand, and bus 187. The Centre Copie-Art is at 813 Ontario. For information call 523-4830.

German academic talks with First Nations writers

Contemporary Challenges to cultural appropriation

Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors
Hartmut Lutz (ed.)
Fifth House Publishers
276 pp., paper

"They have our land, and now they want our stories, our voices too. And I say, 'No!'"

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias is adamant in her opinion that the telling of First Nations stories by non-First Nations people constitutes theft.

Keeshig-Tobias and seventeen other First Nations authors are featured in *Contemporary Challenges*, a collection of conversations between Hartmut Lutz, a German academic who teaches First Nations literature, and authors from various First Nations across Canada.

Although the conversations cover a wide range of issues, appropriation is one of the most challenging. In Canada and the United States, people such as W.P. Kinsella, Lynn V. Andrews and Anne Cameron have made a lot of money by appropriating First Nations peoples' voices.

Any works by non-First Nations authors which purport to give a First Nations account of things, or any book or piece of work that uses First Nations stories or symbols, represents a theft.

The issue is often cast as "Native censorship of non-Native voices". One of the people who has drawn the heaviest fire for fighting against story theft is Keeshig-Tobias. She says that the primary criticism leveled against her by non-First Nations authors is that: "You are censoring my imagination!"

This accusation, Keeshig-Tobias explains, makes her wonder "why God has given the white man such a broad all-encompassing imagination? If it's so broad why can't the white man just make up their own fictional cultural society?"

Daniel David Moses (*Delicate Bodies*, *The White Line*, *Coyote City*) lists the drive towards appropriation as being driven by the idea that "stories were for everybody and everybody could share stories", which he calls "a very nice, liberal thing to say".

According to Moses, when people from outside our cultures tell our stories, "They are just going to screw them up... You say you want the freedom to tell our stories, and then you just screw up it up. Freedom of the imagination shouldn't be freedom to destroy."

Stories place us in this world. First Nations people recognize that the story, in all its forms, is powerful. Stories include gossip, novels, essays, songs, short stories, poems and drama. We are constantly affirming our past and articulating our future at theatres, political forums and around kitchen tables through stories.

Writing outside of First Nations cultures is often seen as a very individual process (that is, the tortured individual creating art for

ally represent an infinite number of people, and the only physical manifestation is yourself," says Maracle.

Maria Campbell (Halfbreed, Riel's People, People of the Buffalo), often called the Grandmother of contemporary First Nations writing in Canada, calls herself a storyteller as opposed to a writer because "I really don't know what a writer is. I know what a storyteller is. A storyteller is a community healer and teacher."

Campbell acknowledges that people who steal First Nations stories often mean well, as well as mean to get rich, but then begs, laughing, "Save me from people who mean well!"

Contemporary Challenges is intended to establish dialogue and is interesting in how it shows

the divergent opinions between Lutz and the various authors he interviews. Would I recommend that you buy the book? No. In the words of Greg Young-Ing (anthologized in *Seventh Generation and Gatherings*): "there are a lot of Native writers. So I would say: 'Read them!'"

— Ardith Walkem

ANY WORKS BY NON-FIRST NATIONS AUTHORS WHICH PURPORT TO GIVE A FIRST NATIONS ACCOUNT OF THINGS, OR ANY BOOK OR PIECE OF WORK THAT USES FIRST NATIONS STORIES OR SYMBOLS, REPRESENTS A THEFT.

art's sake). Lee Maracle (*Bobbi Lee*, *Sojourner's Truth*, *I am Woman*) points out that this individualist concept is foreign to First Nations. A story is told through the individual but belongs to and affects a whole body of people.

"The farther backward in time you travel, the more grandmothers you have, the farther forward, the more grandchildren! You actu-

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Throwing Borges and post- modernism out the window



Unusual Circumstances, Interesting Times And Other Impolite Interventions
Brian Fawcett,
New Star Books, 1991
243 pp., \$14.95

There are two kinds of criticism, moral and technical. In his new book of essays, Brian Fawcett proves the only criticism worth reading includes both.

Fawcett has spent much of the past two decades as an urban planner and an uneven West Coast writer. But he's changed his wayward ways. In this book's opener, "Starting Over Again", he tells of realising that nobody would want to read his last book of poetry.

He saw that his book was part of the privatised kabbala modern poetry has become. And he decided to pursue new ways of writing, to cope with this century and this society.

Along with a ten-year moratorium on publishing poetry, this line of thought produced 1986's *Cambodia: A Book for People Who Find Television Too Slow*, and *Public Eye: An Investigation Into the Disappearance of the World* in 1990.

These books established Fawcett as a serious but witty thinker, whose understanding of the Global Village and all its idiots outreaches most of his CanLit compatriots.

His sudden notoriety even bagged him a *Globe and Mail* column until his anti-corporate sentiments got out of hand.

Fawcett's main concerns are the loss of the local and particular in public discourse and in the real world, the way communications technology can turn lies and tyrannies into Disneyland, and most artists' refusal to deal with these phenomena.

The aftermath, he says, is McDonald's-style "franchise capitalism", "binary thinking" and reactionary sourpusses at the margins.

Unusual Circumstances, Interesting Times and Other Impolite Interventions is a collection of essays about these issues, published in various Canadian magazines over the past five years.

Fawcett is hard on himself as well as on his subjects, and the results are amusing. This is especially true of the first half of the book, titled "Against Private Interventions" — which is less cryptic when you know the second part is called "For Civil Interventions".

Never trust a Noam

His material here includes post-modernism, "hypermmodernism", neurology, the Wayne Gretzky trade, Marxism, the moribundity of Alice Munro, Cambodia, Expo '86, Margaret Atwood, anti-professionalism and why he doesn't trust Noam Chomsky.

No matter what the topic, Fawcett is at his best when discussing how to write — which is to say, how to live. He skewers "self-expression" and other indulgences which let the artist dodge engagement with public life.

And along the way, he demolishes some icons. My favourite is the number he does on Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian tailor of metaliterary short-shorts.

"Borges," Fawcett says, "was an ignorant and dangerous man who has done incalculable damage to literature, and I'm glad the horrible bug-eyed mole is dead."

The pomo groupies now having heaving fits on the floor will have to buy the book to find out why. Same goes for *Globe* art review readers, who might want to know what's behind Fawcett's "Prolegomena to the Defenestration of John Bentley Mays", while the rest of us wait happily for the crash.

This is not to say Fawcett is some kind of prophet. He is still an uneven writer and thinker.

His view of our predicament is filtered by his sentimentality and nostalgia for the Great Liberal Tradition. His faith in anything that sounds like 'common sense' often lands him in a pile of common nonsense, full of platitudes about democracy and the inherent goodness of humanity.

At the same time, Fawcett can be petty. He tends to assume most people are more or less like himself, and otherwise they're "assholes". He has an unfortunate habit of comparing his opponents to either Hitler or Stalin. In this volume, that includes both Pol Pot and anyone who's advocated a multicultural curriculum.

And he returns to the same insights over and over again.

But he is one of the few writers around who recognises that the unexamined sentence is not worth writing. At the very least, this maxim keeps Fawcett out of "the cyclone of lies daily life has become" — and it means he won't waste your time.

— Carl Wilson

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CALENDAR

Monday, January 27th

Club Displays - Union 107-108, 11:00-5:00 p.m. All Week.
 Photo Display - McGill Student delegation to El Salvador, Summer 1991. The Yellow Door, 3625 Aylmer. All day.
 12:00 noon: Video Presentation - McGill Student delegation to El Salvador, Summer 1991. The Yellow Door Coffee House, 3625 Aylmer.
 3:00 p.m.: Film: "Aids in Africa". Union 107-108.
 7:00 p.m.: Indigenous Video Productions from various Developing Nations. Sponsored by the Community Cooperative Development Association (CCDA) - 1992.

Tuesday, January 28th

Club Displays - Union 107-108, 11:00-5:00 p.m. All Week.
 Photo Display - McGill Student delegation to El Salvador, Summer 1991. The Yellow Door, 3625 Aylmer. All day.
 12:00 noon: Worship Service with Prof. Gregory Baum. University Chapel, 3520

University. All Welcome.
 12:30 p.m.: Light Luncheon, Senior Common Room, Birks Building, 3520
 University. Luncheon Workshop: "The Debt Crisis", with Ernie Schibli, Social Justice Committee of Montreal. FREE.
 4:00 p.m.: Video Presentation - McGill Student delegation to El Salvador, Summer 1991. The Yellow Door Coffee House, 3625 Aylmer.
 7:30 p.m.: "The Earth Summit: The United Nations Environment Conference, Brazil, 1992", with Catherine O'Brien, Social Justice Committee of Montreal, Union 1207-108.

Wednesday, January 29th

Club Displays - Union 107-108, 11:00-5:00 p.m. All Week.
 12:00 noon: Video Presentation, Slides, and Discussion with Femmes pour Agriculture et Alimentation Mondiale (FAAM). Union 107-108.
 5:00 p.m.: Film on the impact of Multinationals in Developing Countries. Union 107-108.

6:00 p.m.: Slide show and discussion. Concordia student, 550 Sherbrooke, Room 1175.
 8:00 p.m.: Panel Discussion - "The Future of the Cuban Revolution" with returning scholars and observers. Union 310. Sponsored by McGill Save the Children.

Thursday, January 30th

Club Displays - Union 107-108, 11:00-5:00 p.m. All Week.
 12:00 noon: Community Cooperative Development Association (CCDA) - 1991: Presentations - on India, Philippines, and Costa Rica. Union 107-108.
 2:30 p.m.: Film: "Villa El Salvador" on squatter settlements in Peru. Union 107-108.
 7:00 p.m.: Potluck in the name of PEACE. Basement Diocesan College, 3473 University.

Friday, January 31st

Club Displays - Union 107-108, 11:00-

5:00 p.m. All Week.
 Films and Discussions on Women and Development: 12:00 noon: "Where Credit is Due". 1:00 p.m.: "Portraits of Change". 2:00 p.m.: "The Great Wall of Tradition" (China). Union 107-108.
 8:00 p.m.: Benefit Party for the Community Cooperative Development Association (CCDA) - 1992. Bal St. Louis, Prince Arthur and Colonial (tentative).

Saturday, February 1st

Coffee House - Canadian and Latin Folk Music Live!
 Fundraiser for Centre for Cooperation with El Salvador. Union B09/10. After 8:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 26th

Worship Service: Theme of "Ten Days for World Development". St. Martha's-in-the-Basement, 3521 University, 5:00 p.m.

CLASSIFIEDS

Ads may be placed through the Daily business office, Room B-17, Union Building, 9h00-14h00. Deadline is 14h00, two working days prior to publication.

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